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Educational Writings

REVIEWS AND BOOK NOTES

The psychology of thinking.—One of the chief slogans employed by progressive educators and teachers during the past decade has been "teach the children to think." Lesson-getting and lesson-hearing have been decried in vigorous terms, while the value of training in ability to think has been correspondingly emphasized. While the need has been realized for the shift from mere memorization of subject-matter to critical evaluation and accurate judging of the significance of facts, there has been lacking a practical guide for putting the psychology of thinking into effect in the ordinary school. That is to say, teachers themselves need a practical psychological basis in thinking out the various ways in which they may present the different fields of subject-matter in the school curriculum in order to make thinking the dominant procedure at all times. This need on the part of teachers is so important that the book by Mr. Boraas,[1] comes as a timely contribution to the field of educational psychology. The purpose of the author is set forth in the last paragraph of the first chapter in which he discusses thinking as the greatest thing in teaching. The paragraph reads as follows:

> The following chapters will deal with practical ways and means for promoting what someone has called the "most important strictly private business"; but which may with equal truth also be called the most important business of the public in a democracy—thinking. However, before going to our next topic I have one suggestion to make. An interesting writer says that, in reading, a person should give one hour of thought to every hour of reading, claiming that this would "certainly be more beneficial than two hours devoted entirely to reading." The exercises which follow are offered as suggestions for beginning the hour of thinking [p. 17].

The exercises referred to in this quotation are typical of the lists given at the close of each chapter, and they constitute an important feature of the book. Chapter ii to xiv inclusive take up different types of thinking and different means of developing effective habits of thinking. The chapters on co-operative thinking and developing skill in solving long problems are perhaps the most illuminating of all of the discussions. These chapters represent aspects of thinking that have been largely neglected, hence the value of the practical discussions presented by Mr. Boraas. The other chapters on solving everyday problems, critical thinking, etc., are also of great practical value to teachers. The final chapter is especially valuable in helping teachers form effective habits of thinking about their work.

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[1] JULIUS BORAAS, *Teaching to Think.* New York: Macmillan Co., 1922. Pp. xi+289.

Mr. Boraas has succeeded in writing a very practical psychology of teaching to think. The freedom from technical terms makes the book readable for the ordinary teacher, and the concrete illustrations of the applications of the psychological principles underlying each type of thinking discussed will serve as a guide to teachers in putting these principles into practice. The numerous exercises render the work a valuable text for classes in educational psychology.

H. W. NUTT

The use of trade tests.—The great mass of material which has been accumulated through the efforts of psychologists, psychiatrists, physiologists, and other workers who are concerned with the characteristics of the mental behavior of the individual presents an array of conflicting and confusing evidence. Out of this diverse accumulation one fact stands clearly and unmistakably, namely, that an explanation of human conduct is not to be found, exclusively, in the field of any group of specialists.

What science has been able to do with some of the relatively simple and objective facts of nature we are sometimes asked to believe has been done with the highly complicated and more or less subjective organization of the human mind. We are asked to believe that qualities of the mind can be assayed and measured with minute exactness.

In a study[1] on trade tests the soundness of the data presented and of the conclusions drawn from them depends upon the validity of the assumption that all of the factors which might influence the result of the test, or which might influence the element being tested, had been carefully controlled. Perhaps we should assume that these factors were controlled; however, one cannot be expected to do so where the field is comparatively new, making this particular feature of a study one of the most important and interesting considerations.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Toops neglects to mention, even in a minor or casual way, how the numerous factors that might enter into and influence the reactions obtained from the particular element or elements being tested were controlled. It would have added considerable interest to the study if some recognition had been given to the premise upon which scientific procedure is based, that is, to the standardization and control of all variables which might influence the element being measured or the reactions which were taken as measures of the element. Up to the present there has been no widely heralded

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[1] HERBERT ANDERSON TOOPS, *Trade Tests in Education*, Teachers College Contributions to Education, No. 115. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1921. Pp. vi+118.